

The National Awards for Cinematography held on 27th of May was all about firsts. It was held in Canberra for the first time and was also part of an inaugural Celebration of Cinematography Festival. ACT Branch President, Robb Shaw-Velzen, gives a rundown of the event.

Finally, after a year of organisation, it was here. We kicked off proceedings at the Friday night Q&A session with Andrew Lesnie ACS ASC at the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA). People were queuing, keen to get in and listen to the man who's just shot one of the biggest - hold on, make that two, three, four of the biggest blockbuster films of the last few years. Andrew is on stage with Ron Johanson ACS going through scenes from *Love's Brother*, *Lord of the Rings*, *King Kong*, and the *Big Ad*. There's not a peep in the theatre as everyone hangs off Andrew's every word.

The Festival launch and cocktail party was underway. Sponsors' representatives were there including the NFSA, without whom the Festival would not have been possible. Local sponsors included ScreenACT; CPE/AV Central; the ACT Film and Television Council and some of its local production company members: Alcam, Bearcage, by george studios, The Hub, Reel Communications and Ronin Films; and RLDI. These Canberra sponsors graciously gave their time and money to make the first Celebration of Cinematography Festival a reality.

Saturday morning, Andrew Lesnie held a Masterclass for 50 keen freelance cameraman, DOPs and technicians. Excerpts from *Babe*, *King Kong* and *Lord of the Rings*, and the accompanying discussions kept people enthralled for over four hours. Those keen for more went to the Electric Shadows Cinema for the incredible Gary Graver presentation on Orson Welles.

Special thanks to AV guru Simon Byrne and his group of merry men and Miller's Heidi Tobin who brought an armoury of sponsors banners and designed the fantastic programs. Saturday night and guests began arriving for drinks in the King's Hall. It looked fantastic - lit with blue and gold lights and with a fantastic array of gear. Panavision had a Genesis Digital HD camera; one used on *Superman*. Sony and Miller present a selection of their latest gear.

The ACS animation rolls (thanks to the Queensland branch) and our MC Peter George welcomed everyone. I made a short speech, but thanking all our sponsors took a little longer than anticipated. I thanked my wife Georgina who did so much of the organising but was unable to make it due to our new baby Ari (not named after the camera), which reminds me - my apologies to Arri for pronouncing your name like that of my new son - I wanted him to be there.

I am grateful that the night went so well. The best bit was that I could leave the technical stuff to the very talented Simon Byrne who, from the very beginning said "great projection is what you want - that's what we'll do". Wow! The winning work looked fantastic!

I had the great honour of sitting next to Dion Beebe ACS ASC, recipient of the inaugural International Cinematographer of the Year Award, and his lovely wife Unjoo. I also met more great Aussie exports: Donald McAlpine ACS ASC, Peter James ACS, David Gribble ACS, Andrew Lesnie ACS ASC and a wealth of other great Aussie

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NFSA's Director Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai, John Leake ACS and Mark Clementson presenting the Miller Light Professional Fluid head to the Archive.

On Friday 26th May, the launch of the Celebration of Cinematography was held in Canberra, in association with the Australian Cinematographers Society and the National Film and Sound Archive (NFSA).

The NFSA held a launch cocktail party for the Festival on the Friday evening. Miller Camera Support Equipment in collaboration with Australia's first freelance cinematographer John Leake ACS donated John's first Miller Light Professional Fluid Head and Tripod purchased in September 1960 at the same time as John registered his freelance company John Leake Cinematography.

John Leake ACS presented the tripod to the NFSA's Director Dr Paolo Cherchi Usai. During the presentation John spoke of the

importance of the Miller Fluid Head technology to the field of cinematography, the places and projects where the tripod had accompanied him, the now-famous camera assistants such as Andrew Lesnie ACS ASC, Peter James ACS and David Gribble ACS that had carried this particular tripod and what an honour it was to have his gear submitted to the NFSA.

A dossier of documents about John Leake ACS and the Miller Light Professional Fluid head and tripod was also submitted to the National Film and Sound Archive, detailing the career history of the cinematographer John Leake ACS and a background of the Australian company that changed the capture of quality images over 50 years ago and its importance to the field of cinematography with its fluid head technology.

talent like Joanne Bouzianis-Sellick, who won a Tripod for *Gargoyle*, and Ben Nott who took out two awards, including the Milli Award for *Salems Lot*.

Many thanks to the NSW Branch; especially David Wakeley ACS, Ted Rayment ACS and Ian Baseby, who looked after ticketing and trophies and shared their experience running Awards nights and gave me the encouragement to do something out of the norm this year. Thanks to ACT members, Paul Simpson, Tony Connors and Pete Smith, for their work at the Q&A and the Awards.

This year we are celebrating 50 years of television, 100 years of cinema, and the achievements of Australian cinematographers.